

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please delete claims 16-19.

1. (amended) An apparatus for ~~joining a first member to a second member via a threaded coupling member, said apparatus~~ comprising:

a first member having an ~~interlocking structure aperture~~ disposed at an engaging region;

a ~~threaded coupling member~~ having an external thread set and having a complementary portion ~~corresponding to for engaging a portion of the interlocking structure the aperture~~; and

a second member having an internal thread set adapted to engage ~~a portion of the external thread set of the threaded coupling member and to receive a portion of the engaging region of the first member within the internal thread set to thereby connecting~~ the second member to the first member.

13, 2. (original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first member is a planar element.

3. (amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the ~~interlocking structure aperture~~ is formed in a region adjacent an edge portion of the first member.

4. (amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the ~~interlocking structure is first member has more than one interlocking structure aperture~~.

5. (amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~said interlocking structure the aperture~~ is a selected one from among the group including: a slot, a groove, an aperture, a recessed portion, a blind hole, a pin, a shank, a ridge feature, a tang, a serpentine feature, an elbow feature, and a lip feature.

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6. (amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the ~~threaded-coupling~~ member has a larger diameter dimension than a thickness dimension of the first member.

7. (deleted)

8. (deleted)

9. (deleted)

10. (amended) An apparatus for connecting two members together ~~using a binding force provided by an internal thread set of one of the two members, said apparatus comprising:~~

a first member having ~~a pair of opposing major surfaces, an engaging region on at least one of the major surfaces, and an interlocking structure~~ a slot disposed at said engaging region;

an elongate threaded coupling member having an external thread set and an engaging portion ~~corresponding to the interlocking structure for engaging the slot~~ of the first member, said threaded coupling member removably engaging the ~~interlocking structure slot~~; and

13.
(cont) a second member having an internal thread set sized to cooperate with the external thread set of the threaded coupling member, wherein when said external thread set of the threaded coupling member is threadedly received within the internal thread set said threaded coupling member securely binds the first member to the second member.

11. amended) An apparatus according to claim ~~12-10~~, wherein elongate threaded coupling member is two longitudinal portions of a threaded shank each having an threaded exterior surface and a substantially flat interior surface.

12. (amended) An apparatus according to claim ~~12-11~~, wherein the ~~interlocking structure is a pair of pin members coupled to first member engages~~ the substantially flat interior surface of one of the two longitudinal portions of the threaded shank.

13. (amended) An apparatus according to claim ~~12-10~~, wherein the thickness of the first member is less than a diameter of the internal thread set.

14. (amended) An apparatus for joining two members via a threaded coupling member, said apparatus comprising:

a first member having an ~~interlocking structure aperture~~ disposed proximate an edge;

an elongate threaded coupling member having an external thread set and an engaging portion corresponding to the ~~interlocking structure aperture~~ of the first member, said threaded coupling member removably engaging the ~~interlocking structure aperture~~ and extending away from the edge of the first member; and

a second member having an internal thread set sized to cooperate with the external thread set of the threaded coupling member, said internal thread set operatively receiving a portion of the external thread set of the threaded coupling member and a portion of the first member to securely bind the first member to the second member.

15. An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the interlocking structure is more than one interlocking structure.

16. (deleted)

17. (deleted)

18. (deleted)

19. (deleted)

20. (new) A method of coupling a non-threaded member to a threaded member comprising:

creating an interlocking structure adjacent to an engaging portion of the non-threaded member;

engaging the interlocking structure with a threaded coupling member; and

threadedly engaging the threaded member to the threaded coupling member.